

**Testimony
Kathy Eagen
Town Manager
Town of Farmington
Before the Planning & Development Committee
March 21, 2011**

**RE: SUPPORT - HB-6411 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO
STUDY WAYS IN WHICH TO PROVIDE MUNICIPAL MANDATE RELIEF.**

I urge you to support **HB-6411** which creates a mechanism for exploring opportunities to provide much-needed mandate relief to towns.

This has been a very difficult budget year, given that state aid is expected to be flat-funded once again and other sources of state aid are uncertain. Although we are making significant efforts to reduce costs, revenues have been flat or decreasing, putting us in the position of having to look for additional cuts or increase property taxes.

Unfortunately, state mandates, many of which are under-funded or unfunded, make it difficult to control costs in our budgets. I therefore support efforts to adopt the following mandate relief measures currently pending before the General Assembly:

Enacting a 2/3 Approval Requirement for Any Unfunded Mandate – Requiring any new unfunded mandates to be approved by a 2/3 vote of the General Assembly will ensure that lawmakers fully consider the cost implications associated with new mandates. Too often, the costs associated with a new mandate are not fully understood until the measure has been adopted.

Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) - The Minimum Budget Requirements makes it difficult to achieve any real cost savings because state law mandates that school budgets cannot be reduced below previous year spending levels. Towns need more flexibility to ensure that if cost savings are achieved or enrollment has declined, these savings can be used to reduce the education budget.

New School Reform Mandates – While Public Act 10-111 was very well intentioned, it includes a number of costly mandates that we simply cannot afford at this time. We therefore appreciate support for HB-6498 which will delay implementation of the school reforms until federal or state funds are available to fund the programs

Eliminate the five-year statistical revaluation mandate - The state's statistical revaluation requirements have proven far more costly than anticipated. Towns should be permitted to delay or eliminate the statistical revaluation.

Binding Arbitration Reform – Towns need more control over local education budgets. Reforming the binding arbitration laws will help ensure that steep salary and benefit

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